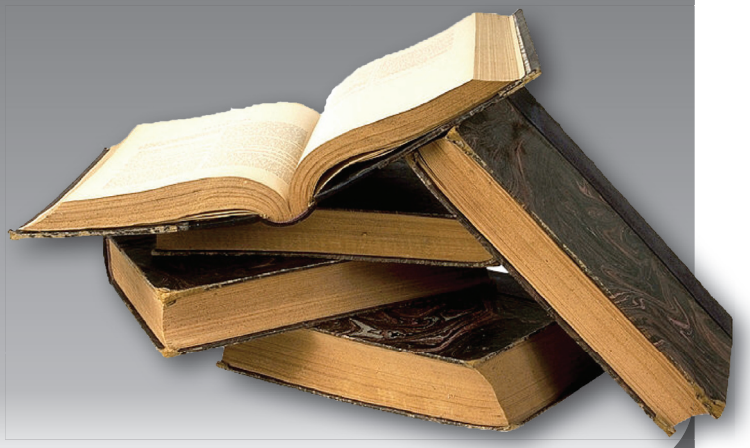
Torah Quotes



Major Texts that Form the Basis of the religious Jewish Anti-Zionist Position

Biblical Verses Foretelling That G-d Will Send the Jews into Exile

Leviticus 26:33

And if you do not listen to Me, and do not keep all these commandments... and I will scatter you among the nations...

Deuteronomy 28:36

G-d will lead you and your king, whom you will appoint over you, to a nation you and your fathers did not know.

Deuteronomy 28:63

You shall be moved off the good land which you come to inherit, and G-d will scatter you among all the nations, from one end of the earth to the other.

Biblical Verses Saying that the Jewish People Will be Gathered in from Exile Only When the Messiah Comes

Isaiah 11:1-12

A royal scepter will emerge from the stock of Yeeshay, and a sapling will sprout from his roots. The spirit of G-d will rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and power, the spirit of knowledge and fear of G-d... And it shall come to pass on that day, that the Almighty will once again acquire the rest of His people...and He will gather the dispersed of Israel, and the scattered of Judah He will gather from the four corners of the earth.

Ezekiel 37:21-24

So says the Almighty G-d, behold I will take the Children of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from all sides, and I will bring them to their land...and My servant David will be king over them, one shepherd will be for all of them.

Talmudic Sources Saying that Jews Are Forbidden to Return from Exile on Their Own and Create a State

Tractate Kesubos 111a

The Biblical book Song of Songs says: "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the deer of the field, not to arouse or awaken the love before it is desired." This oath occurs three times in the Song of Songs (2:7, 3:5 and 8:4). The Talmud interprets this metaphorical language to mean as follows: the speaker here is G-d, and the "daughters of Jerusalem" are the Jewish people. During the Jewish exile, which began with the destruction of the Temple in the year 69 CE, G-d placed three oaths upon the Jewish people. The Jewish people were foresworn not to immigrate as a wall (i.e. en masse) to the Holy Land, not to rebel against the other nationsand not to make any attempt to preempt the redemption.

Precedent: Other Moments in History When Jews Attempted to End Exile in an Unauthorized Way

The Tribe of Ephraim

The Midrash Rabbah on Exodus (20:11) states that part of the tribe of Ephraim left Egypt thirty years before the Exodus, and where not successful. The Midrash Rabbah on Song of Songs 2:7 says that these descendents of Ephraim transgressed the Oath.

The Invaders

The Book of Numbers (14:44) relates that a group of Jews undertook an unauthorized invasion of the Holy Land after the sin of the spies. Moses warned them, "Why do you transgress the command of G-d? It will not succeed!" The TargumYonasan on Song of Songs 2:7 says that these invaders transgressed the Oath.

Famous Jewish Commentators and Legal Authorities

Rashi (1040-1105)

The prayer "G-d of salvations, in the four oaths" is a reference to the oaths of the Song of Songs. We ask G-d: Save us, for You have made us swear not to rebel against the nations, and we are keeping your oath in exile and bearing the yoke of exile. (Commentary to the Prayerbook)

Maimonides (1135-1204)

The messiah will gather in the Jews from exile. Whoever does not believe in him is denying the Torah, which says (Deuteronomy 30:3), "The L-rd your G-d will restore your exiles and have mercy on you." (Laws of Kings 11:1)

When King Solomon, peace be upon him, made known with his holy inspiration that this nation, when it is sunk into exile, will try to arouse itself not at its proper time... and travails will come upon them - he warned against this, and made an oath against this in an allegorical way, and said (Song of Songs 2:7), 'I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem...'(Letter to the Jews of Yemen)

Rabbi Isaac Ohr Zarua (1200-1270)

Living in the Holy Land is a meritorious act; nevertheless, the Jewish people must not all go up together with a strong hand, in an act similar to the ingathering of the exiles, for they are not permitted to hasten the end, until the Creator hastens our redemption. (PiskeiRiaz, Kesubos 13:8)

Rabbi Bachya ben Asher (d. 1340)

We must follow in the footsteps of the Patriarchs and prepare ourselves to approach the gentiles with gifts, with soft speech and with prayer before G-d. But war is impossible, for G-d made the Jewish people swear not to wage wars against the nations. (Commentary to Genesis 32:3)

Rabbi Yitzchak ben Sheishes (1326-1408)

There is no doubt that traveling to the Holy Land is a meritorious act...but now, one of the Three Oaths G-d made the Jewish people swear is not to go up en masse. (Responsa of the Rivash, Chapter 101)

Rabbi Shlomo ben Shimon Duran (1400-1467)

During exile, living in the Holy Land is not a general commandment for all Jews, but on the contrary it is forbidden, as the Talmud says in the last chapter of Kesubos, that this is one of the oaths that G-d made the Jews swear: that they not hurry the end and not go up as a wall. Go and see what happened to the children of Ephraim when they hurried the end! (Responsa of theRashbash, Chapter 2)

Rabbi Isaac Abarbanel (1437-1508)

Abraham feared that his descendants would rise up to leave the exile before the time set by G-d...we must bear the yoke of the exile and live under the nations until the time of the End.(YeshuosMeshicho v. 1, p. 11b)

Rabbi Chaim Ben Attar (1696-1743)

The verse "I will scatter you among the nations" refers to the first oath, which mandates that the Jews remain scattered and not immigrate as a wall, with a strong hand, to resettle the Holy Land. (OhrHachaim Commentary to Leviticus 26:32-33)

Rabbi Yonasan Eybeschutz (1690-1764)

The Jewish people cries out to the nations, "Do not awaken an early ingathering of Israel! Even if all the Jews are ready to go to Jerusalem, and all the nations agree, still, G-d forbid that I should go there!" (AhavasYonasan)

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888)

When the uprising led by Bar Kochba proved a disastrous error, it became essential that the Jewish people be reminded for all times of an important fact; namely, that they must never again attempt to restore their national independence by their own power; they were to entrust their future as a nation solely to Divine Providence. (Commentary on the Prayerbook, p. 703)

Ethical Teachings from the Talmud and Jewish Law

The Babylonian Talmud, compiled about 1500 years ago, is the comprehensive body of Jewish law intended to explain and safeguard the laws of the Bible. Religious Jews believe that the basic laws of the Talmud were given to Moses at Mt. Sinai and transmitted orally from generation to generation.

Countless passages in the Talmud, its commentaries and legal codes show the ideals of kindness and fairness to all of mankind aspired to and practiced by the Jewish people.

Unfortunately, some individuals in our time have accused the Talmud of advocating racism and unfair treatment of gentiles. They provide short quotations, invariably taken completely out of context, that seem to support their accusations.

In reply to these accusers, we can only remind people that the Talmud is the word of G-d, not of man. The Talmud contains a vast amount of material; to cover it all takes the brightest scholars a lifetime of study. Although it does contain a small number of statements directed at gentiles, most of the Talmud consists of laws and sharply-stated ethical teachings directed at Jews. For every "anti-gentile" statement the critics can find, there are ten "anti-Jewish" statements. And just as the latter must be studied in context, so too the former.

One brief example: the Babylonian Talmud was written in Babylonia as its name indicates. Yet it contains the statement, "Whoever lives outside the Holy Land is as if he worshipped idols."

The greatest proof that the Talmud does not advocate unfair treatment of gentiles is that every since the Talmud was completed, the Jews who follow it have lived in exile among many gentile countries. In every place where they lived, they conducted their business and private affairs with the local gentiles with the utmost honesty and fairness.

Below you will find quotations from the major codes of Talmudic law, exemplifying the Talmud's positions on gentiles. The Code of Jewish Law, written about 500 years ago by a Palestinian rabbi named Rabbi Joseph Caro (1488-1575), is today the universally accepted codification of Talmudic law. Before that, the codes of Maimonides (1135-1204) were prevalent.

Charity

Jews are obligated to give charity to poor gentiles as well as poor Jews (Code of Jewish Law, YorehDeah 251:1)

Jews must bury the dead of the gentiles, comfort their mourners and visit their sick. (Maimonides, Laws of Mourning 14:12)

The commandment of "visiting the sick" applies to sick gentiles as well as sick Jews. (Code of Jewish Law, YorehDeah 335:9)

Theft

Anyone who steals even a minor amount violates the prohibition of [Leviticus 19:11] "You shall not steal" and is required to repay [the amount stolen] whether one steals from a Jew or a gentile. (Code of Jewish Law, ChoshenMishpat 348:2)

It is forbidden to rob or to cheat even a minor amount from either a Jew or a gentile. (Code of Jewish Law, ChoshenMishpat 359:1)

It is Biblically forbidden to steal even a minor amount; even a gentile - it is forbidden to steal from him or to cheat him. And if you stole from him or cheated him you must return the stolen money or object. (Maimonides, Laws of Stealing 1:2)

Maimonides of blessed memory wrote that if one lies in his measures and thereby overcharges even to an idolatrous gentile one violates a negative commandment and must return the money. Similarly, it is forbidden to mislead the gentiles in calculating prices as it says [Leviticus 25:50] "he shall make a reckoning with his purchaser" even if

he is subjugated to your authority; even more so if the gentile is not subjugated to your authority, and it says [Deuteronomy 25:16] "For an abomination to the Lord, your G-d, are all who do this." (SeferHaChinuch, 259)

And similiarly, lies, tricks, subterfuges, cheatings, and circumventions of gentiles are forbidden. They said, "It is forbidden to deceive anyone, even an idolatrous gentile" and even more so when it can lead to the desecration of G-d's name. For that is a great sin and imbues in a person bad traits. And regarding all these wicked actions, G-d explained that He will be disgusted with them and with those who perform them, as it says: (Deuteronomy 18:12) "For anyone who does these is an abomination of G-d." (Maimonides, Commentary to the Mishnah, Keilim 12:7)

Returning Lost Objects

R. Chaninah told this story: Some rabbinic scholars bought one pile of wheat from some gentile soldiers. [The scholars] found in it a bundle of money and returned it to [the soldiers]. [The soldiers] said "Blessed is the G-d of the Jews." (Jerusalem Talmud BavaMetzia 2:5 (7a))

Once, Rabbi Shimon ben Shetach bought a donkey from an Arab. His students went and found a precious stone hanging around [the donkey's] neck. Rabbi said to him [Proverbs 10:22] "It is the blessing of G-d that enriches." R. Shimon ben Shetach said to him "I bought a donkey. I did not buy a precious stone." He went and returned it to the Arab and the Arab said "Blessed is the G-d of Shimon ben Shetach." (Midrash DevarimRabbah 3:3)

R. Shmuel ben Sustrai went to Rome when the empress had lost her bracelet and he found it. A decree was proclaimed in the region that anyone who returned it within 30 days would be paid such and such; anyone who returned it after 30 days would be beheaded. He didn't return it within 30 days but after 30 days. She said to him "Weren't you in the region?" He replied "Yes." She said to him "Didn't you hear the proclamation?" He replied "Yes." She said to him "What was it?" He replied "Whoever returns it within 30 days will receive such and such; whoever returns it after 30 days will be beheaded." She said to him "And why didn't you return it within 30 days?" He replied "So that you wouldn't say that I did it because of fear of you; rather I did it out of fear of G-d." She said to him "Blessed is the G-d of the Jews." (Jerusalem Talmud BavaMetzia 2:5 (7a))

Deception

Talmud, Tractate Chullin 94a: Shmuel said: One may not deceive another person, even a non-Jew. This was not said explicitly by Shmuel, but was derived from the following story: Shmuel once crossed the river using a ferryboat. He told his servant to pay the ferryman. The servant gave the ferryman a non-kosher chicken, allowing the ferryman to assume that it was kosher.

The Talmudic commentator Rashi explains: Shmuel's law explains why the Mishnah says that one may not give a non-Jew a piece of meat from which the sciatic nerve (forbidden to Jews) was not removed. The non-Jew might not notice this and may assume that the Jew is giving him valuable kosher meat. He will then feel gratitude toward the Jew, a gratitude based on a false premise.

This law is codified by Maimonides (Laws of Sale 18:3) and by the Code of Jewish Law (ChoshenMishpat 228:6).

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